



Family Awareness

HISTORY

Family Awareness was conceived at United Airlines in 1985 when contract negotiations became adversarial. Every union leader consulted by the United pilots during their initial planning emphasized that it was the spouse who put the backbone into labor's effort. Contract negotiations were stressful, not only for pilots, but for each pilot's family. Due to the actions of UAL management, it became clear that a need existed for a communication program to inform pilot families about the impending confrontation and to enlist their support. The family support each pilot received was crucial to the group effort. Equally as important was the spouses' understanding of the impact of the pilot career choice on their families, and their feeling comfortable participating in the decision-making process.

Family Awareness allowed the United pilots to succeed by using the proven techniques of group dynamics to communicate with the pilots and their families. Those same group dynamics proved to be an effective support vehicle for those families. What began as a communication program ultimately developed into a powerful support network encompassing the well-being of the entire family.

From its beginning, Family Awareness has served both as an essential part of contract negotiations as well as a formidable family support network. ALPA's Family Awareness Program was tailored to meet the unique challenges of any geographically and culturally diverse pilot group. The intent of the program is to instill pride and esprit-de-corps into an MEC Family which is many times spread throughout the nation.

ORGANIZATION

The Family Awareness Program was founded with the purpose of communicating quickly and economically to the entire pilot group. Development of the initial concept came from the phone tree (you call two people...who call two people...who in turn each call two people...); in a short period of time you have reached hundreds.

The program still has the same purpose, but the structure has changed. Today, pilot groups organize themselves by domicile or large geographically by city or area where many pilot families live. Each group has a Group Leader composed of a pilot and spouse team or Area Coordinator. If needed, a Regional Director supports a few groups, while the entire program is directed by the Family Awareness Chairperson.